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Guest columnist

Return of the prodigal daughter

BETHESDA, Md. — Svetlana Alliluyeva has told reporters in Moscow that she never felt free in the Free World. In the context of Svetlana's tormented life, freedom is a fugitive if not impossible ideal.

I met her in London a year ago when together we worked on the revision of her third book, *The Far Away Music*. It was an odd sort of manuscript — a patchy, wistful retelling of disappointments in the West.

She wrote that she had been exploited in the publication of her first two books, ignored by American intellectuals, and that she had fought and won a battle with alcoholism.

Nothing came of our work on her book. She was unwilling to write more without a contract; we were not satisfied with her flimsy manuscript.

Unlike her first two books, she was writing this one in English. She said she felt near-physical revulsion in hearing her native Russian and had not

taught a word of it to her 13-year-old daughter, Olga.

And she had come to abhor the middleman, the translator. She had never been sure that those words had been her own.

There are simple truths behind the ridiculous Soviet allegations that Svetlana's first two books were written by the CIA and others.

Yes, when she presented herself as a defector in 1967, her manuscript probably was read by American intelligence.

Yes, in the process of translation and editing, there is the danger of subtle metamorphosis. Yes, specialists may have reviewed her works for her publishers. But to twist the facts into grotesque versions of themselves is an unconscionable manipulation of truth.

She had never wanted to be perceived as political. She fled one place because it judged her as Stalin's daughter. Another place took her measure by the same undeniable fact. As a

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mother of two Soviets and one American, the political did figure in her life. She wrote me:

"I am for peace because I have my children on both sides, in both nuclear superpowers. . . . Both are ugly militaristic; both are self-destructive; both are lying . . ."

For all the Soviet efforts to make her words speak to a holowness in our freedom, Svetlana's political freedom never was uppermost in her mind.

Penniless and, by her own admission, friendless in her hermit's existence in Cambridge, she found that scavenging the world for an inner freedom was, after all, pointless.

In a place where the difficult questions of daily survival could be avoided, as ward of the state and prodigal daughter of the rehabilitated Little Father, she might at last be home.